

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

LEGISLATION MAKES SCHOOL CODES OF CONDUCT MANDATORY

VICTORIA – The Province introduced legislation today requiring all B.C. school boards to have codes of conduct that meet provincial standards in order to help make classrooms safer for students and staff.

“A recent survey of B.C. school districts showed that one-third of schools don’t have codes of conduct that meet provincial standards,” said Education Minister Shirley Bond. “This legislation will ensure school boards establish standards for appropriate behaviour in every school in B.C. Students learn better when they feel safe at school.”

The survey last fall also indicated that while all 60 school districts reported having safe school policies in place, only 20 districts said all of their schools have codes of conduct that meet provincial standards. Under Bill 22, the Education Statutes Amendment Act, school boards must establish codes of conduct for students in their districts to help prevent bullying and harassment. The codes of conduct must meet the provincial standards set out in the Safe Schools Strategy introduced in March 2004.

The amendment also fulfils election platform and throne speech commitments to give government the ability to communicate directly with teachers. This builds on the first annual teachers’ congress held in November 2006, where teachers were able to share their classroom insights and experiences directly with the Province.

“I’ve met with hundreds of teachers during my visits to school districts around the Province, and have been so impressed with the hard work, professionalism and dedication they show towards our children,” said Bond. “We value their expertise and look forward to the opportunity to communicate with them.”

The Province also introduced legislation today improving the way school district business companies operate. The new legislation is the result of government’s announcement in October 2006 that school district business companies would be required to comply with tough new rules that would improve accountability and transparency.

The legislative amendments to the School Act regarding school district business companies require:

- The majority of directors to be at arm’s length from the school board.
- June 30 to be prescribed as fiscal year end.
- School district business companies to appoint auditors and prepare financial statements.
- School district business companies to include a schedule of transactions between the business company and the school board in audited financial statements.
- School district business companies to issue annual reports.
- School district business companies to hold annual general meetings that are open to the public.

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"Parents and school boards had concerns about school district business companies and we listened to those concerns," said Bond. "The new legislation will help make school district business companies more accountable and transparent, and that will better serve the public interest."

Government made changes to the School Act in 2002 to enable school boards to create business entities that could generate extra funds for their districts. There are currently 12 school districts with business companies.

The Province also made a number of amendments to the School Act to:

- Allow additional uses of personal education numbers.
- More accurately describe the role of the board of examiners.
- Prevent a conflict that may arise when the school funding announcement date specified in the School Act precedes the provincial budget announcement.
- Partially reimburse students for expenses incurred in earning an external credential or post-secondary credit.
- Reflect the titles currently being used by the francophone education authority, Conseil scolaire francophone.

The legislation will also:

- Amend the Teaching Profession Act to permit the college to hold annual general meetings in the fall, which will make full financial reporting possible.
- Amend the School Act and Independent School Act to clarify that only the Ministry of Education can issue the Dogwood graduation certificate.

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